

Looking Back



July 29, 1996.
Ben Franklin
filed Chapter 11
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of the ACCI
show.

By Bill Gardner

Craftrends started as a promotional tool for Plaid, but evolved into the leading craft trade magazine. Plus, some industry highlights from the last 20 years.



In 1982, Plaid Enterprises started *Craftrends* to promote its own products. John McDonald, who eventually became the magazine's first publisher recalls that it was the only four-color magazine in the industry, and that it received very strong response from retailers.

McDonald says that in order to make sure the magazine reached all retailers, Dave Cunningham, founder and then-owner of Plaid, worked with industry distributors to get the magazines to all their customers. "One of those distributors," McDonald remembers, "was Bud Rothchild at Craft World, which at the time was the largest craft wholesaler in the country. Bud was very aggressive at growing his business and recognized the appeal the magazine had to retailers. He called Dave Cunningham and asked if he could advertise in Plaid's magazine."

That planted the idea in Cunningham's mind that perhaps the publication had potential to be a true trade magazine. In March of 1983, Archibald Press was formed, of which McDonald became president and publisher, and that's when *Craftrends* began operating autonomously from Plaid. Archibald Press also eventually published *Stenciling*

Quarterly and *Craft and Home*, both consumer magazines. In addition, the company published more than 7.5 million copies of a four-color consumer promotional catalog that was used by retailers nationwide as an advertising and promotional tool. The catalog was co-sponsored by Craft World.

By 1989, the magazine had grown substantially, but so had Plaid, which was now competing with many of its advertisers as a product manufacturer. Those advertisers felt they were supporting their competitor by advertising in the magazine and its growth began to wane. "That," says McDonald, "was when we decided to sell the magazine so it could continue its growth unencumbered by perceived involvement by Plaid."

In June of 1989, *Craftrends* was sold to Century Communications, a small family-owned publishing company in Niles, Illinois. Eventually, editorial and production offices were relocated there from Atlanta. Under the ownership of Century, *Craftrends* flourished, but on July 1, 1995, the magazine was sold to PJS Publications, the Peoria, Illinois-based division of K-III Communications, which later became known as Primedia. When *Craftrends*

was acquired, the company merged it with PCM, and began publishing one magazine under the *Craftrends* banner.

Craftrends editorial and production offices returned to Atlanta in 1995, where they stayed until 1999. They were then relocated to Golden, Colorado, where Primedia decided to base its craft/sewing/quilting division following its acquisition a year earlier of Golden-based Lemay Publications.

In those first years, the magazine was published six times a year and featured Plaid product ads and project how-to's. In 1983, the magazine began including "Bright Ideas from Retailers" and highlighted products featured at that year's Hobby Industry Association (HIA) show.

Later in 1983, the magazine began featuring business articles and trends.

For the first 17 years of *Craftrends'* existence, the front cover each month was a product advertisement, and when advertising began being offered to other companies, the cover became a paid advertisement. That changed in September 1999, when it was decided the cover should reflect the contents of the issue. That first, "non-paid"

cover featured Mike Dupey, the founder of MJDesigns, whose company went out of business earlier that year. (MJDesigns was re-established as a new company in 2001.)

Some highlights from the pages of Craftrends:

May 1987. Aleene will begin airing "Creative Living" on cable stations across the nation.

January 1989. HIA considered changing its name to Craft Association and International. A stalemate existed regarding shows as HIA and ACCI battled over southern California and TNNA and SEYG had yet to discuss a merger.

January 1989. HIA announced that at its show that year, it would allow in coverters of craft materials for the gift market, architectural designers, institutional buyers, and members of the Society of Craft Designers.

September 1989. ACCI approved the creation of a 26-program television series for PBS. HIA expanded membership to Professional Craft Producers, service organizations, and institutional buyers.

October 1989. Ben Franklin

announced it would open two craft-only stores of its own in early 1990.

December 1989. Aleene announced cancellation of her TV show, but said she planned to explore other options.

January 1990. MSI Holdings, a group formed to buy Michaels, was unable to arrange financing to purchase the chain, due in large part, to the decline of the junk bond market.

June 1990. Aleene's "Creative Living With Crafts" to begin airing on The Nashville Network. Ames hired Stephen Pistner, a turnaround expert, to rescue the company from bankruptcy caused by its purchase of Zayer's.

February 1991. Financial problems prompt TNNA to eliminate executive director position and drop public relations agency.

April 1991. Michaels expected to show net income of \$6 million for the year, up from \$13,000 the previous year.

May 1991. National Intergroup spun off Ben Franklin as an independent, publicly traded company. It had been for sale since June 1990.

May 1991. After a long battle,

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June 1993. MJDesigns filed suit against Michaels questioning Michaels' right to operate a store in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

House of Fabrics (602 stores) and Fabricland (77 stores) merged.

July 1991. Rag Shops began trading on NASDAQ at 6.25. HIA allowed designers, demonstrators, and teachers to become members.

September 1991. Leewards said it would go public on NASDAQ, but that was cancelled the day trading started amid reports of flat third-quarter profits.

September 1991. With stores in Texas and Florida, Zaks filed Chapter 11.

January 1992. Fabri-Centers agreed to buy New York Fabrics' 18 stores in the San Francisco area.

March 1992. Zaks emerged from Chapter 11.

July 1992. Leewards received \$10 million additional equity from Frontenac Co. Ames sold 10 Crafts & More stores to Northwest Fabrics and

changed those stores to Rainbow Crafts.

August 1992. Karey Bresenhan, president of Quilt Market, started a petition to force the Smithsonian to terminate licensing agreement which called for quilts from the Smithsonian collection to be reproduced in China and sold in America.

August 1992. Frontenac assumed majority interest in Leewards.

October 1992. Leewards repaid debt early.

November 1992. Ames filed amended re-organization plan. *Creative Product News* ceased publication.

December 1992. Ames to emerge from Chapter 11.

March 1993. Michaels announced plans to open three stores in Canada in '93; 20 in five years.

April 1993. Old America Stores

(62 locations) and White Rose Crafts Nursery (Canada) each announced plans to go public.

June 1993. MJDesigns filed suit against Michaels questioning Michaels' right to operate a store in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. They had opened a store under the Moskatel's name. In 1983 the two companies agreed that MJDesigns had exclusive development rights in the nine-county Dallas-Fort Worth region.

July 1993. The Smithsonian won't renew licensing contract that allowed reproductions of its quilts to be made in China.

August 1993. HIA announced it will sponsor its first overseas show in 1995 in the Netherlands.

September 1993. SEYG changed name to INRG (International Needleart Retailers Guild).

December 1993. Winn's Stores sold 53-store chain, Crafts Etc., to management group of Winn's executives. Aleene's filed Chapter 11.

March 1994. Excerpt from Mike Dupey's (MJDesigns) acceptance speech for an HIA President's Award: "To all the large retailers who feel that price is the craft industry and they continue to demand lower prices and deals – and to all the manufacturers who give in – remember one thing: This industry was started by creative, artistic people who enjoy teaching others their craft ideas. Without these people we are nothing. Pay them. Respect them. Keep them. They brought you ALL to the ballgame."

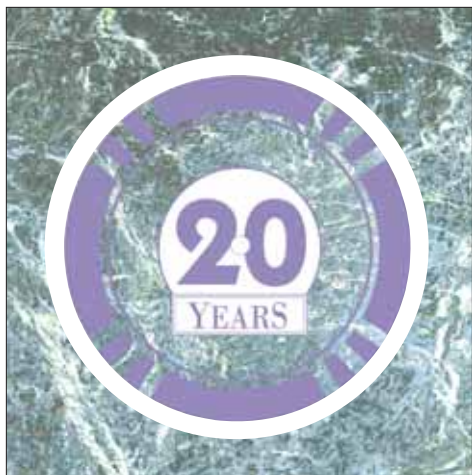
April 1994. Zaks filed Chapter 7 and sold stores to Ambers. Michaels bought Oregon Craft/H&H Floral (16 stores) and Treasure House. Winn's filed Chapter 11 (184 Winn's Variety and 53 Crafts Etc. stores).

June 1994. Michaels acquired Leewards (101 stores), and announced plans to close 25 of them. Craft World filed Chapter 11.

August 1994. House of Fabrics said it would close 80 mall stores.

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Amber's halted growth. Fabric King filed Chapter 11. Aleene's TV show was the highest-rated daytime show on TNN.

September 1994. TNNA dismissed all five employees and signed management contract with Offinger Management.

October 1994. Fabri-Centers announced plans to buy Cloth World (343 stores). House of Fabrics to close 200 stores.

December 1994. Quote from Alan Rosskamm, president and ceo of Fabri-Centers: "Industry consolidation is necessary, but by itself is not the answer. It does not make us a healthy industry ... we need to create consumer excitement ... we need to deliver better products at a better price and give the value back to the customer."

December 1994. Ben Franklin reached franchise agreement with Crafts Etc., which Winn's had sold to a management group. Ben Franklin incorporated the 45 stores as Crafts Plus+. House of Fabrics filed Chapter 11.

February 1995. Aleene's reorganization included partnerships with Duncan and Oxmoor House.

July 4, 1995. Bob Ross died of cancer.

September 1995. Aleene's emerged from Chapter 11. Amber's

July 1999. MJDesigns to go out of business. Efforts to find investors or sell the company failed.

stock listed from NASDAQ.

September 25, 1995. QVC held its first craft and hobby day.

October 1995. Amber's to close eight Dallas stores. 21 stores remain in smaller cities.

February 1996. House of Fabrics to close 86 stores and its South Carolina warehouse.

April 1996. Ben Franklin announced corporate layoffs and closing of warehouse. Piece Goods acquired Northwest Fabrics (77 stores plus seven Rainbow Bay Crafts stores). Piece Goods had emerged from Chapter 11 about seven months earlier. Mangelsen's filed Chapter 11.

May 1996. Michaels and MJDesigns settled out of court. Michaels was given approval to open stores under the Michaels name in the Dallas-Fort Worth area beginning May 1, 1997.

July 29, 1996. Ben Franklin filed Chapter 11 on the last day of the ACCI show.

August 1996. Endeavor Retail bought Amber's and Amber's exited Chapter 11.

October 1996. House of Fabrics exited Chapter 11.

March 1997. Mangelsen's emerged from Chapter 11. Ben Franklin ordered to liquidate by late March.

April 1997. Ben Franklin assets sold at public auction. Promotions

Unlimited purchased Ben Franklin name for \$3.3 million.

May 1997. Amber's filed Chapter 11.

June 1997. Crafts+ (24 stores) in Chapter 11.

July 1997. Silas Creek Retail (Piece Goods, Northwest Fabrics) filed Chapter 11.

March 1998. Fabri-Centers bought House of Fabrics. Old America assets sold to Bob Kirkland, an individual investor, who then created a new company, Old America Stores LP.

August 1998. Fabri-Centers changed its name to Jo-Ann Stores Inc.

December 1998. MJDesigns announced it would close 11 of 57 stores.

January 1999. A.C. Moore announced it would concentrate for six months on existing store base to bring sales and profit up to acceptable levels. Ozark Art & Craft closed its doors.

February 1999. Tandy crafts announced it would close 121 stores. At the HIA show that month, MJDesigns used *Craftrends Today* as its vehicle to announce it had filed Chapter 11.

May 1999. Michaels purchased 16 leases from MJDesigns.

July 1999. MJDesigns to go out of business. Efforts to find investors or sell the company failed.

September 1999. About 450 employees of MJDesigns and Cardinal Investments resurrected the company and re-opened eight stores in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

December 1999. Hancock Fabrics completed its acquisition of 30 Mae's Fabrics store leases.

February 2000. Artis Inc. filed Chapter 11. A year earlier the company made final payment to creditors from its November 1993 bankruptcy filing, paying them 100 percent plus interest.

June 2000. Michaels acquired Star

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Wholesale Florist.

July 2000. TNN canceled "Aleene's Creative Living".

July 31, 2000. Artis Inc. and Aleene's Creative Living ceased business operations.

December 2000. Ames announced it would close 32 stores, cutting 2,000 jobs.

February 17, 2001. Primedia acquired *Creating Keepsakes Magazine*.

December 12, 2001. Michaels moved its stock listing from NASDAQ to the new York Stock Exchange and changed its symbol to MIK.

OLDIES BUT GOODIES

Following is a partial list of industry companies that, along with *Craftrends*, have reached or surpassed the 20-year mark. Some surpassed it centuries ago!

100+

Fiskars	353
Cranston	178
Blumenthal/Lansing	125
Zweigart	125
Lion Brand Yarn	124
General Pencil	113
American & Efind	111
Wright's	105
Leader Paper Products/ Paper Adventures	101
Crescent Cardboard	100

50-99

S&S Worldwide	96
Sailor Pen Co.	90
Elvee/Rosenberg	88
Sakura of Japan	81
AMACO	80
Walter Foster Publishing	80
Clover Mfg.	75
Beacon Adhesives	76
Ranger	73
Dremel	70
Kunin Felt	approx. 64
Petersen-Arne	62
HIA	61
Art Wire Works	60
Robert Kaufman	60
Syndicate Sales	56
Carolina Mfg.	56
Zim's	55
Hy-Way	55
Krylon	55
House of White Birches	55

Artograph	55
Checker Distributors	54
F.A. Edmunds	53
Chartpak	53

30-49

Gagne	49
Crafter's Choice	47
Fasco	45
P&B Textiles	40
Stan Brown Art & Crafts	approx.40
Grafix	39
Quincrafts	37
Geme Art	35
Sue Scheewee Pub.	over 35
Eas'l Publications (evolved from retail store)	34
Golding Handicrafts (New Zealand)	33
<i>Quilter's Newsletter Magazine</i>	33
Dee's Delights	33
JHB Int'l.	33
Environmental Tech.	33
Airtex Consumer Prod.	33
Search Press	32
Wichelt	32
Accents Unlimited	32
Leisure Arts	31
Yaley	over 30
BagWorks	30
Rings & Things	30
Alice Peterson Co.	30
Kreinik	30
Society of Decorative Painters	30

20-29

Therm-O-Web	29
Alto's EZ Mat	28
Logan Graphic Products	28
Roto Zip Tool	28
Putnam Co.	28
Demis Products	27
Therm-o-Web	27
Annie's Attic	27
Leeco Industries	27
Plaid	26
ArtBin	26
Dimensions/Perler	26
Master Magnetics	26
ASN Publishing	25
Klutz	25
Artifacts	25
Polyform	25
Nielsen Bainbridge	25
AC Marketech	over 25
<i>Crafts Magazine</i>	24
RJR	24
Mrs. Grossman's	23
Decorator & Craft Corp.	23
Posh Presents	23
Hot Off The Press	22

<i>Sew News Magazine</i>	22
Wood 'N Needle Crafts	22
Leather Factory	22
Stencil Ease	22
Speed Stitch	22
Temkin International	22
Betty Byrd Brushes	22
Stampendous	21
Elegance In Easels	21
Keeping Memories Alive	21
Adhesive Technologies	21
Armour Products	over 20
PSX	over 20
Tsukineko	over 20
Pioneer Photo Albums	20
Craft Product Div/ Hobbs Bonded Fibers	20
Sewing With Nancy	20

Brands

LeFranc & Bourgeois	282
Winsor & Newton	170
Koh-I-Noor	154
Bucilla	135
Pelikan	124
Liquitex	47
Mod Podge	35

Retailers

Duckwall/ALCO	101
Curry's Cart Store (Can.)	91
Dick Blick	91
Lewiscraft (Can.)	89
Pacific Fabrics & Crafts	85
Fred Meyer	80
Pearl Fine Art	69
Meijer	68
Jo-Ann Stores	59
Aaron Bros.	56
Dueber's	56
Cord Camera	48
Pat Catan's	48
Hancock Fabrics	45
Ames	44
Mill Stores	44
Wal-Mart	40
The Yarn Mart	39
Prairie Gardens/ JeffreyAlans	37
Tall Mouse	36
Beverly Fabrics	34
Fabric Place	34
Fabricland (Can.)	34
Treasure Island	32
White Rose (Can.)	32
Rag Shops	31
Creative Corner	30
Hobby Lobby	30
Hungate's	30
Crafts & Stuff	26
Lazy Daisy	24
Garden Ridge	23
Craft Warehouse	22